



David P. Driscoll
Commissioner of Education

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Commissioner's Update

July 20, 2004




Dear Superintendents, and Leaders of Charter Schools and Collaborative:

In this update I have just one announcement and three items posted at www.doe.mass.edu/.

Back to School Update

Traditionally, the Department of Education posts just one Commissioner's Update in the month of August. The annual "Back to School" package includes numerous announcements and important information to help you prepare for the upcoming school year. I expect that it will be posted on or about August 20th.

Here are three items recently posted at www.doe.mass.edu/:

1. Commissioner's Summer Institute Presentation to MASS (Massachusetts Association for School Superintendents)

2. MCAS Participation: Students Attending Private Special Education Schools

3. School Performance Improvement Mapping Guide


All the best, and
Sincerely,

David P. Driscoll
Commissioner of Education

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A Decade of Progress: Education Reform in Massachusetts

David P. Driscoll
Commissioner of Education

M.A.S.S. Summer Institute
Falmouth, MA
July 16, 2004



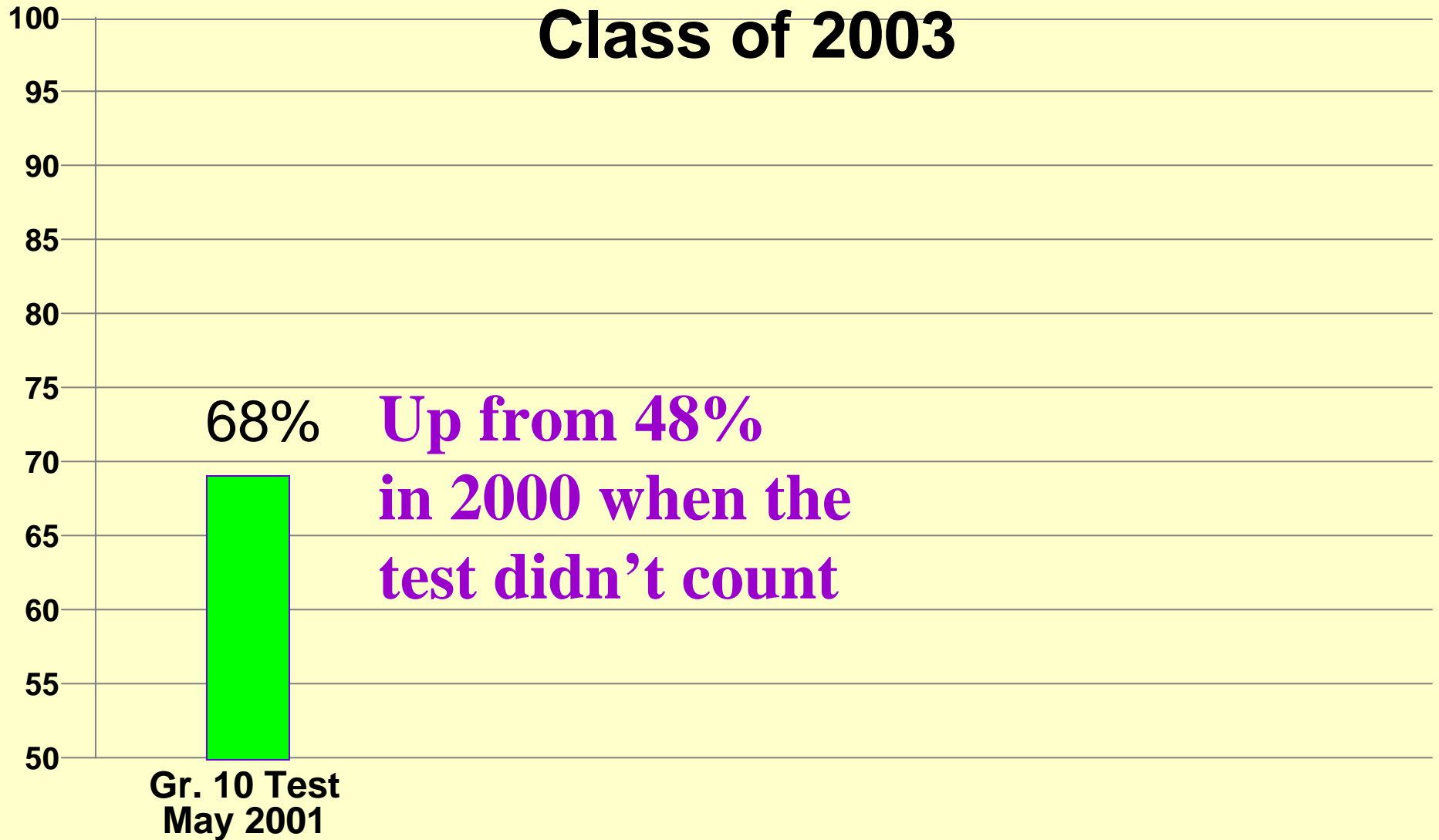
How Are We Doing?

- Results on State Tests
 - High school graduation test
 - Grade level tests
- Results on National Tests
 - SAT
 - NAEP



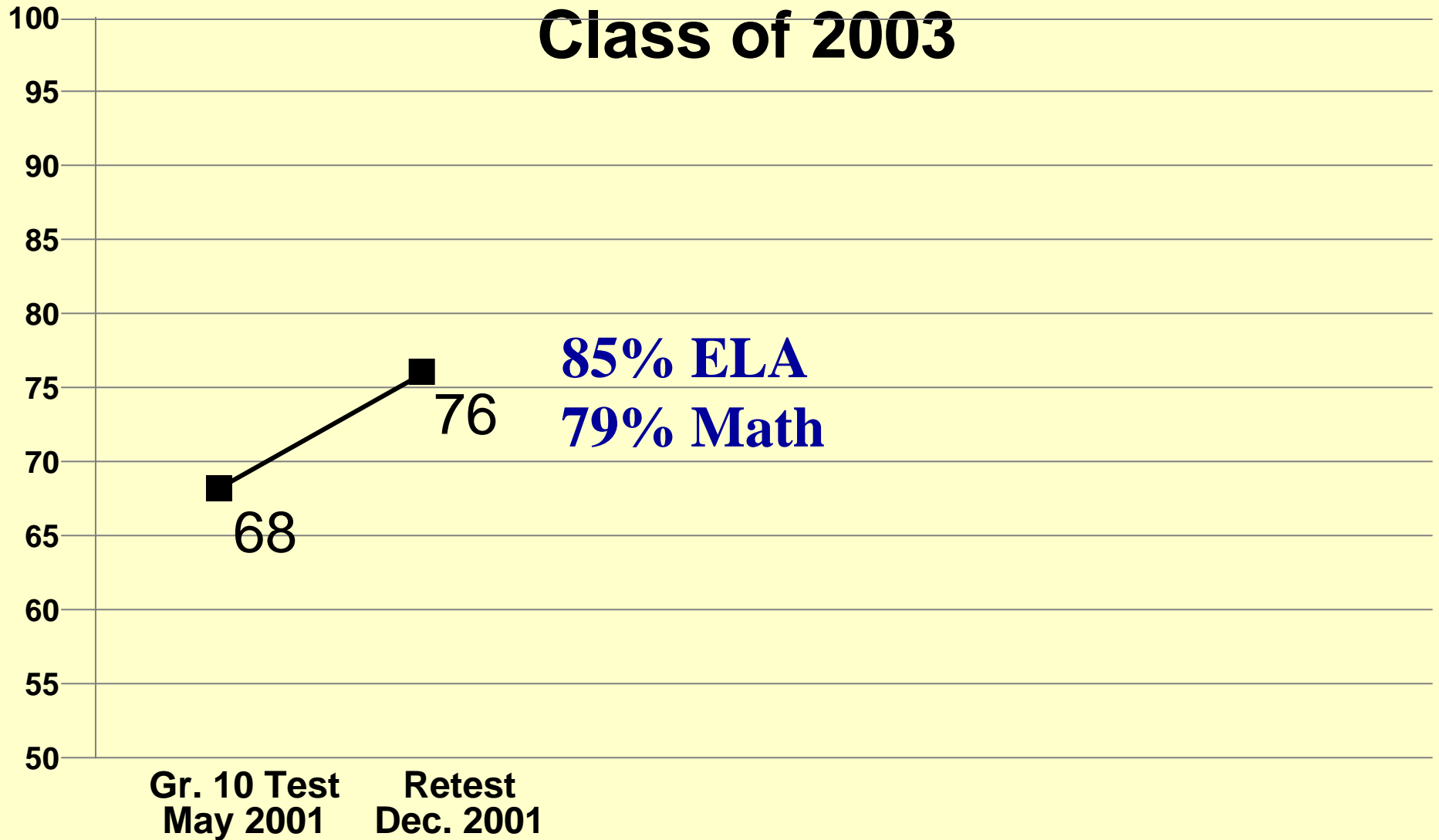
Percentage of Students Meeting the High School Graduation Standard

Class of 2003



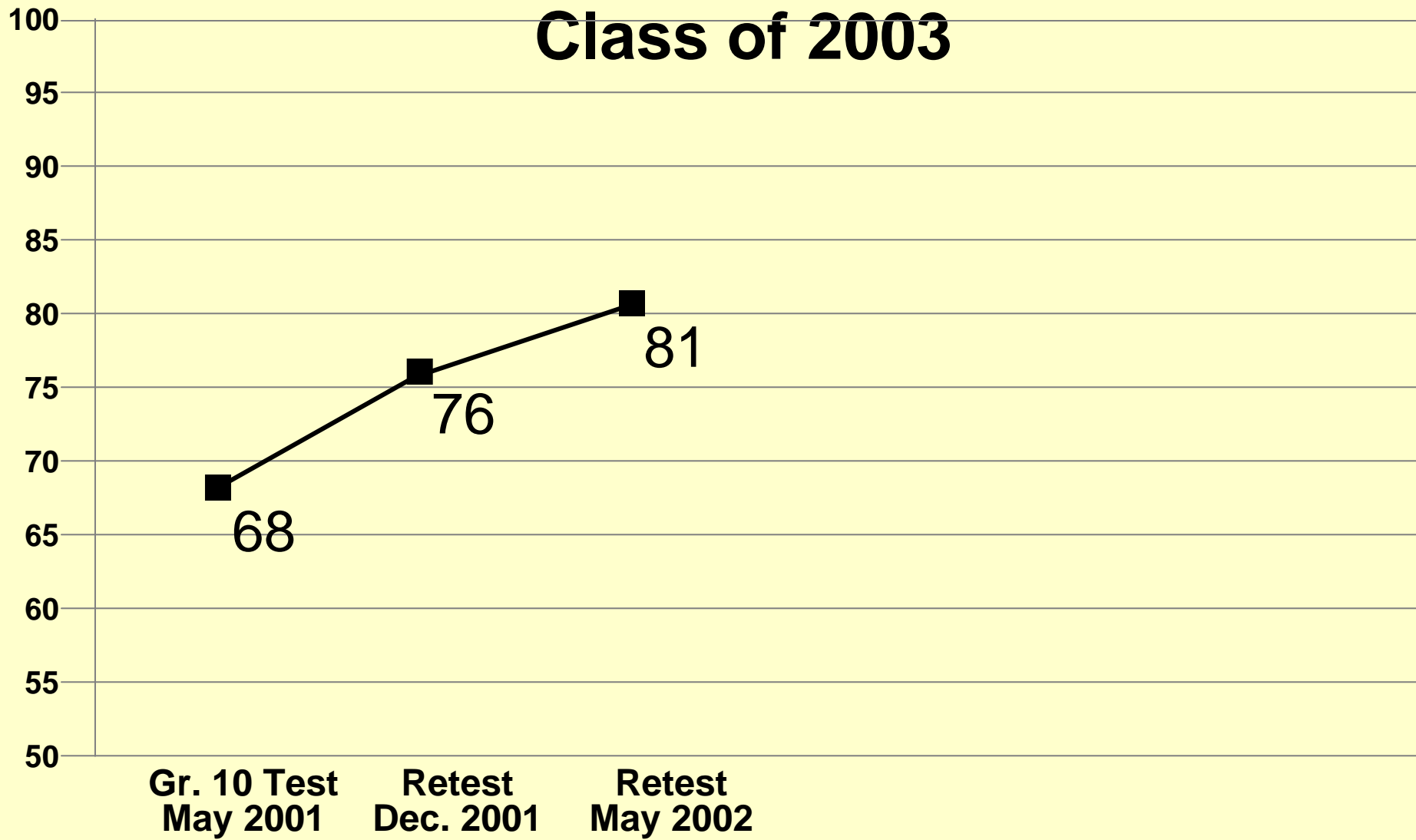
Cumulative Percentage of Students Meeting the High School Graduation Standard

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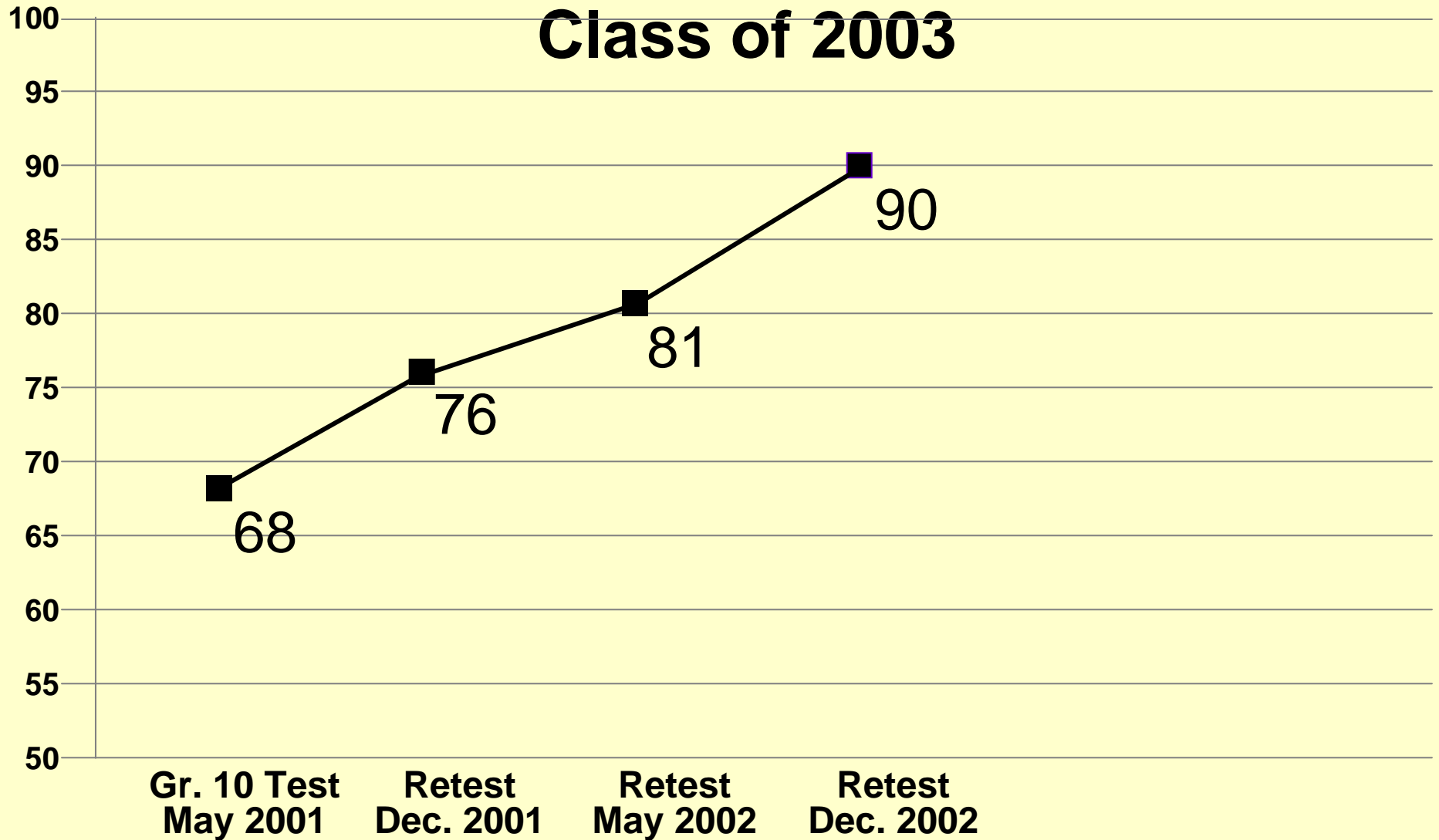
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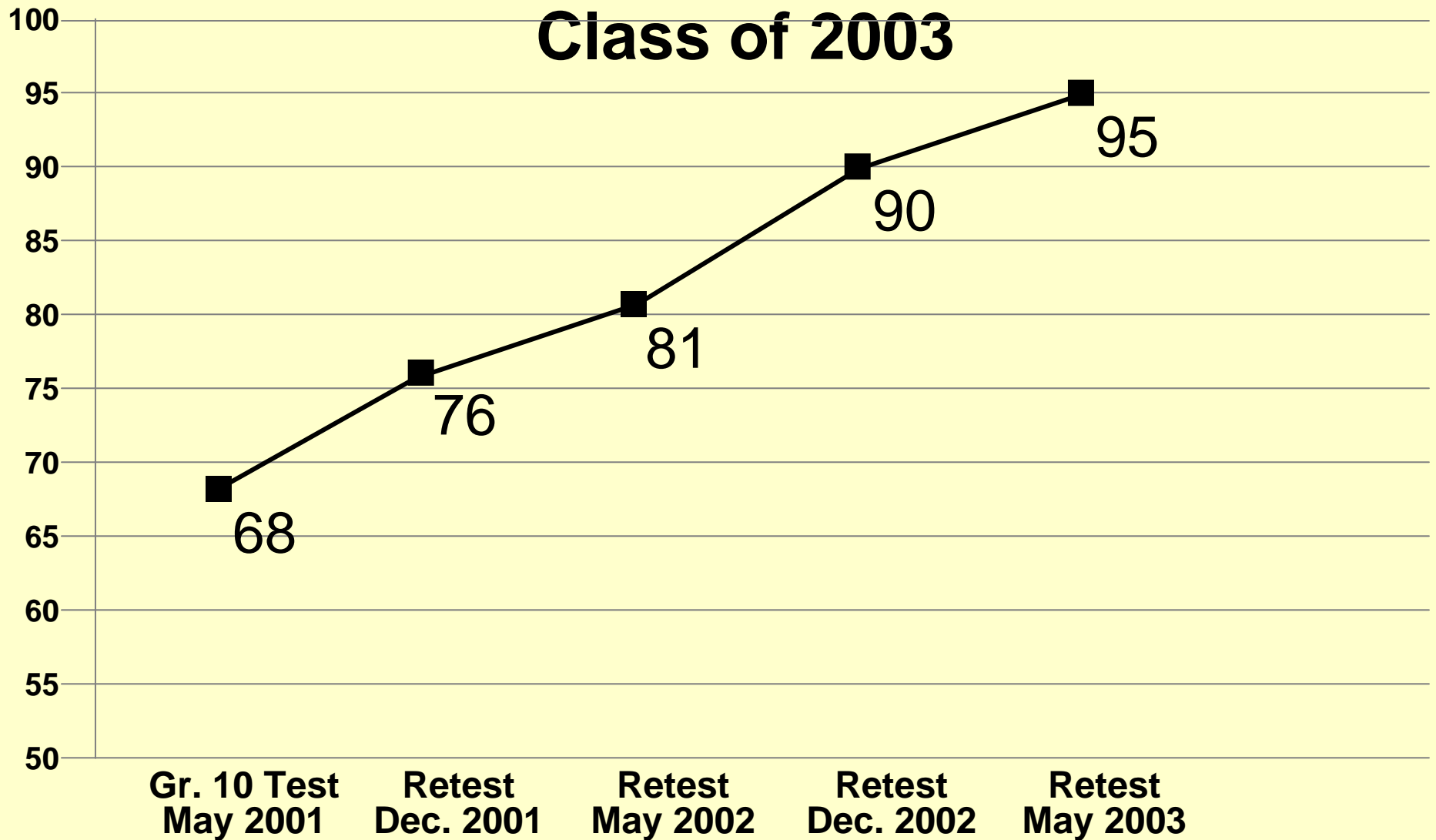
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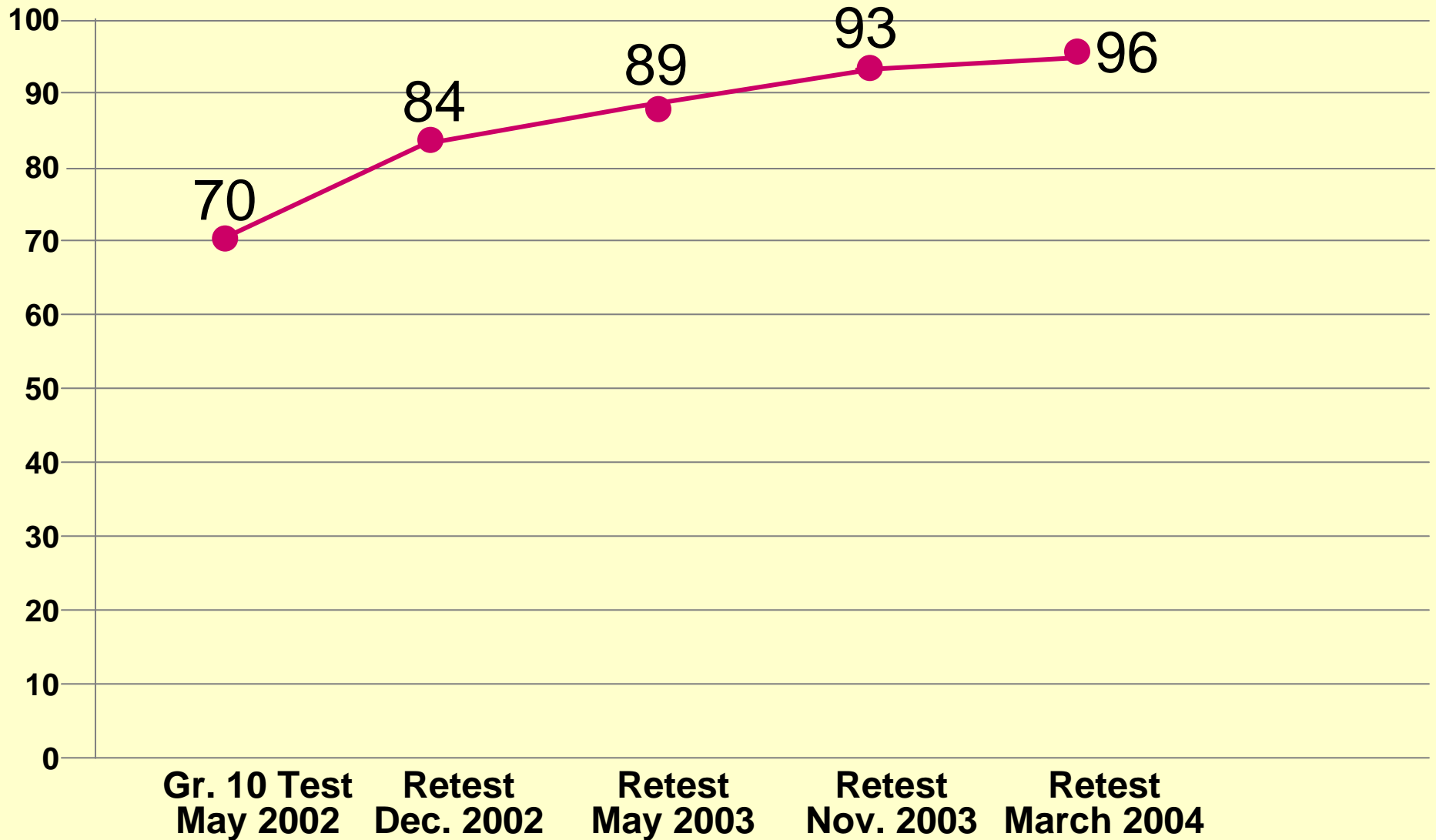


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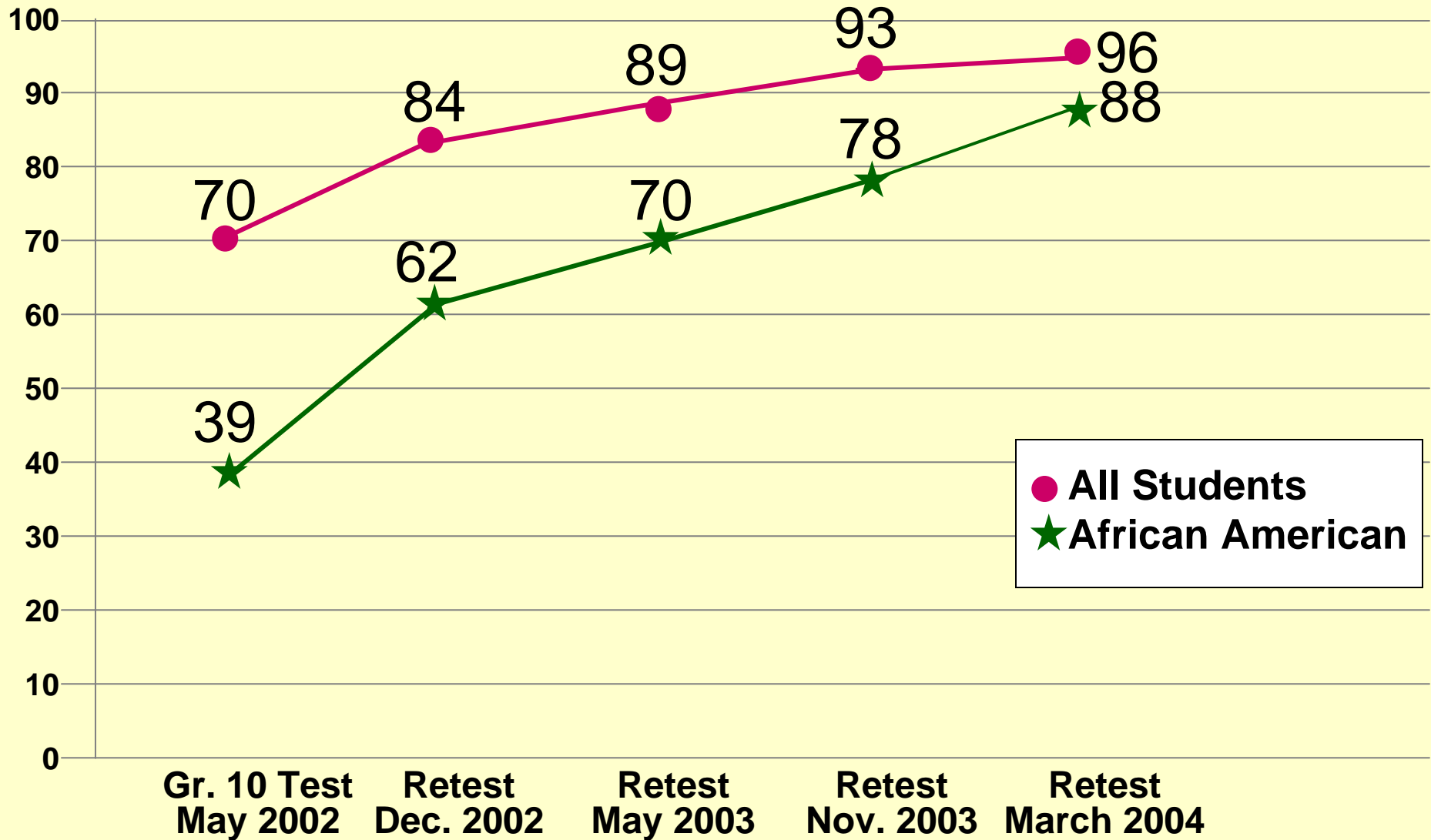
Class of 2003



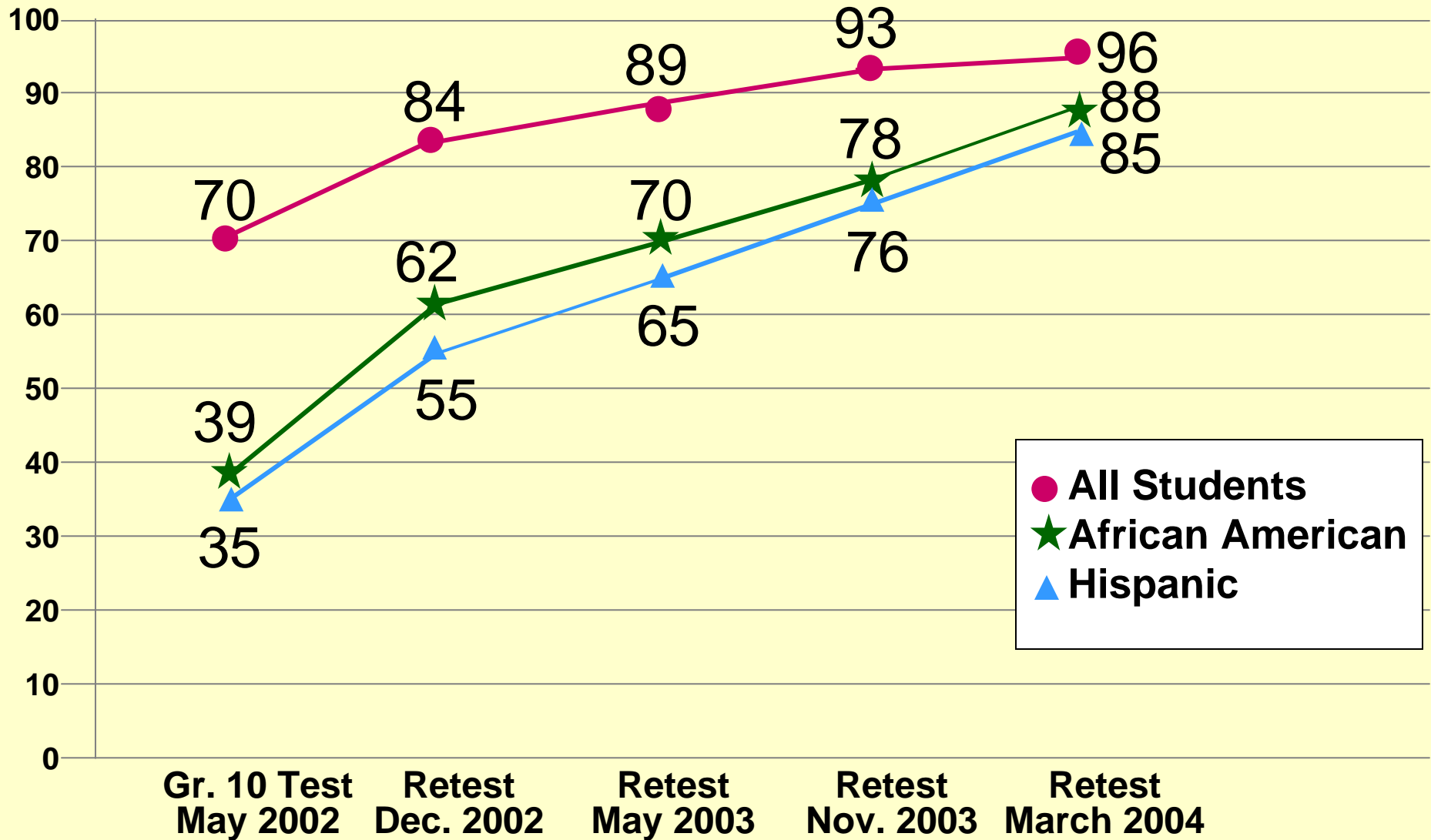
Cumulative Percentage of Students Meeting the HS Graduation Standard Class of 2004



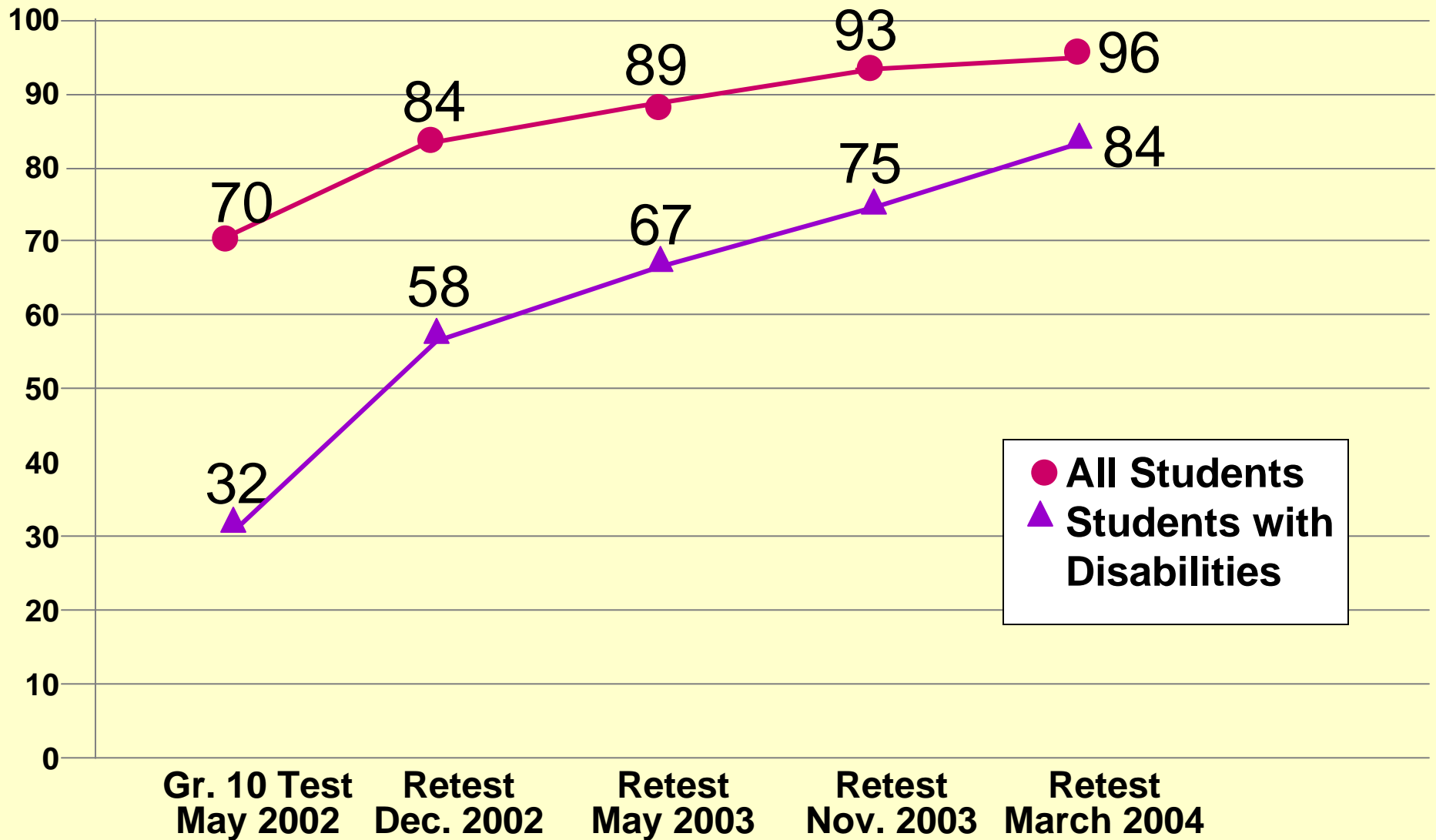
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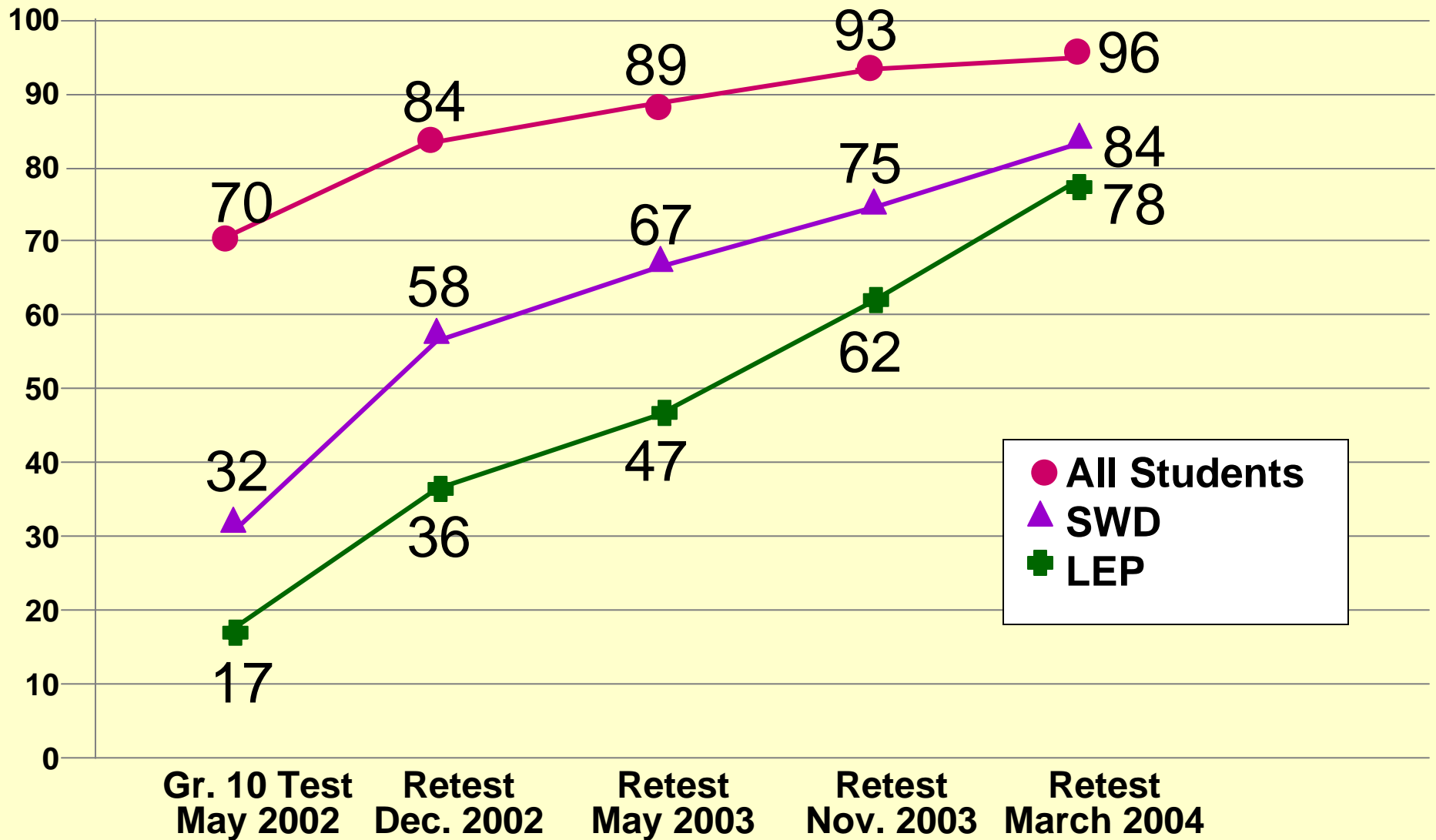
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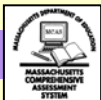
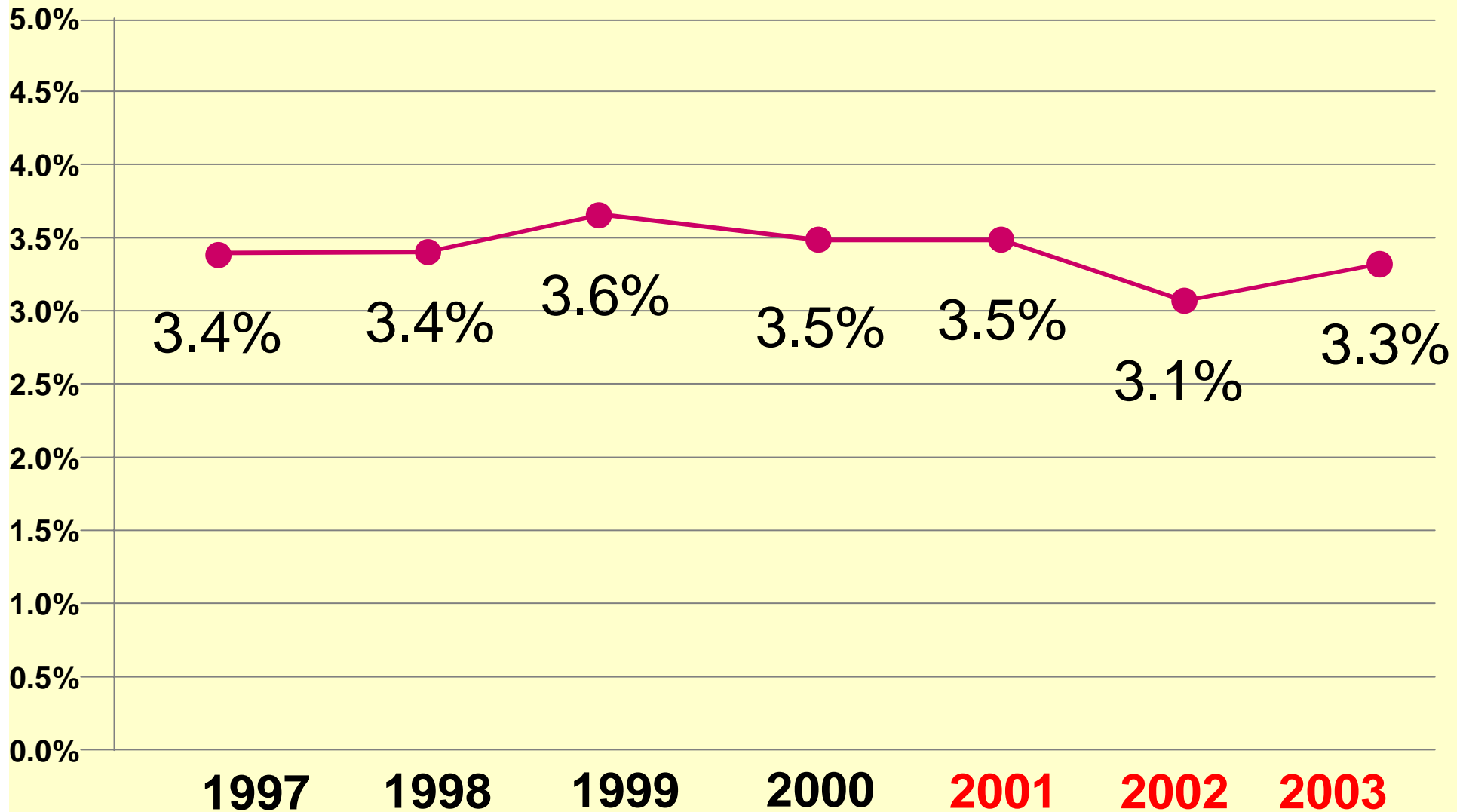
Cumulative Percentage of Students Meeting the HS Graduation Standard Class of 2004



Cumulative Percentage of Students Meeting the HS Graduation Standard Class of 2004



Annual Grade 9 –12 Dropout Rates: 1997 to 2003



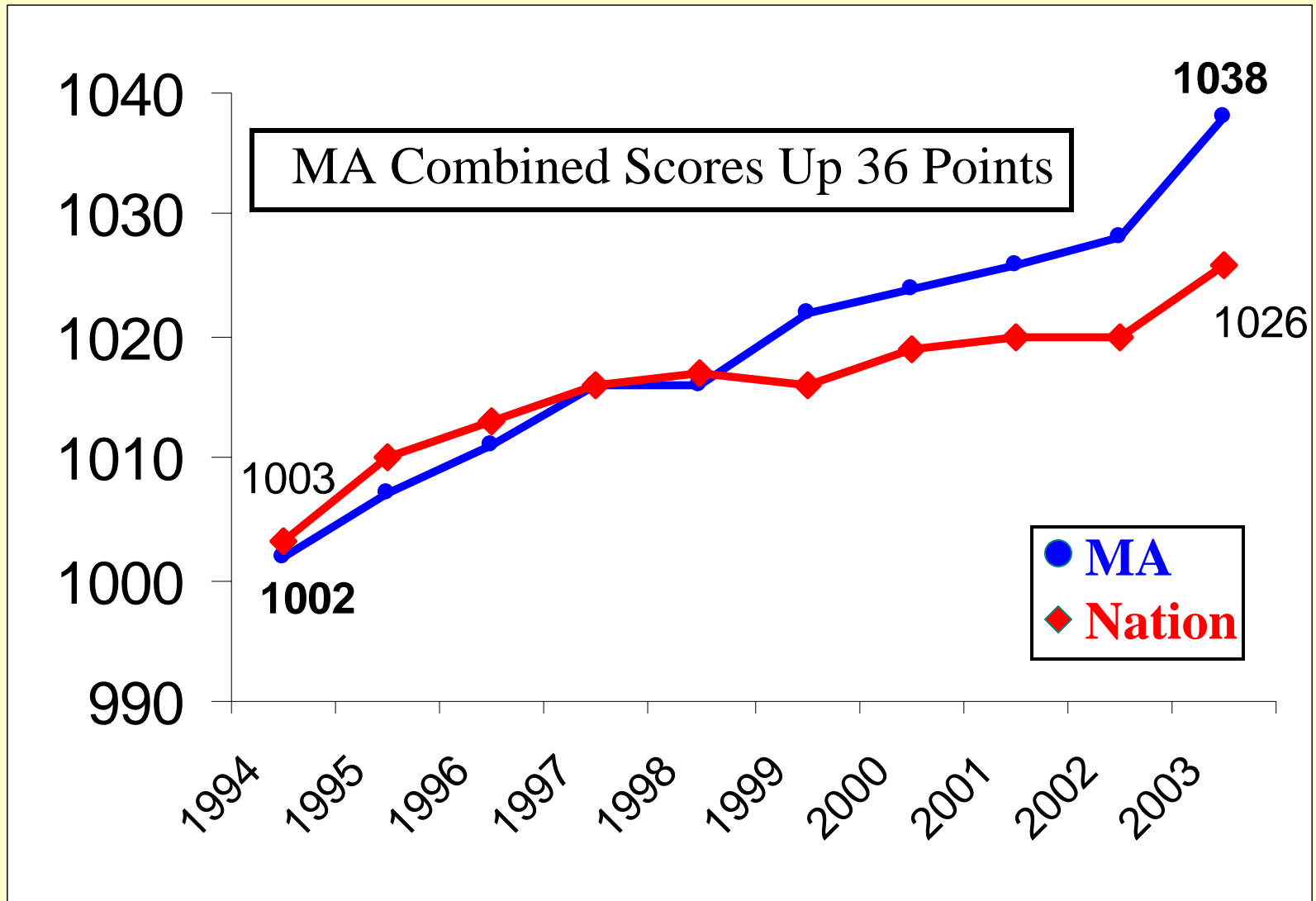
MCAS ELA and Math Results

Grade Level Trends

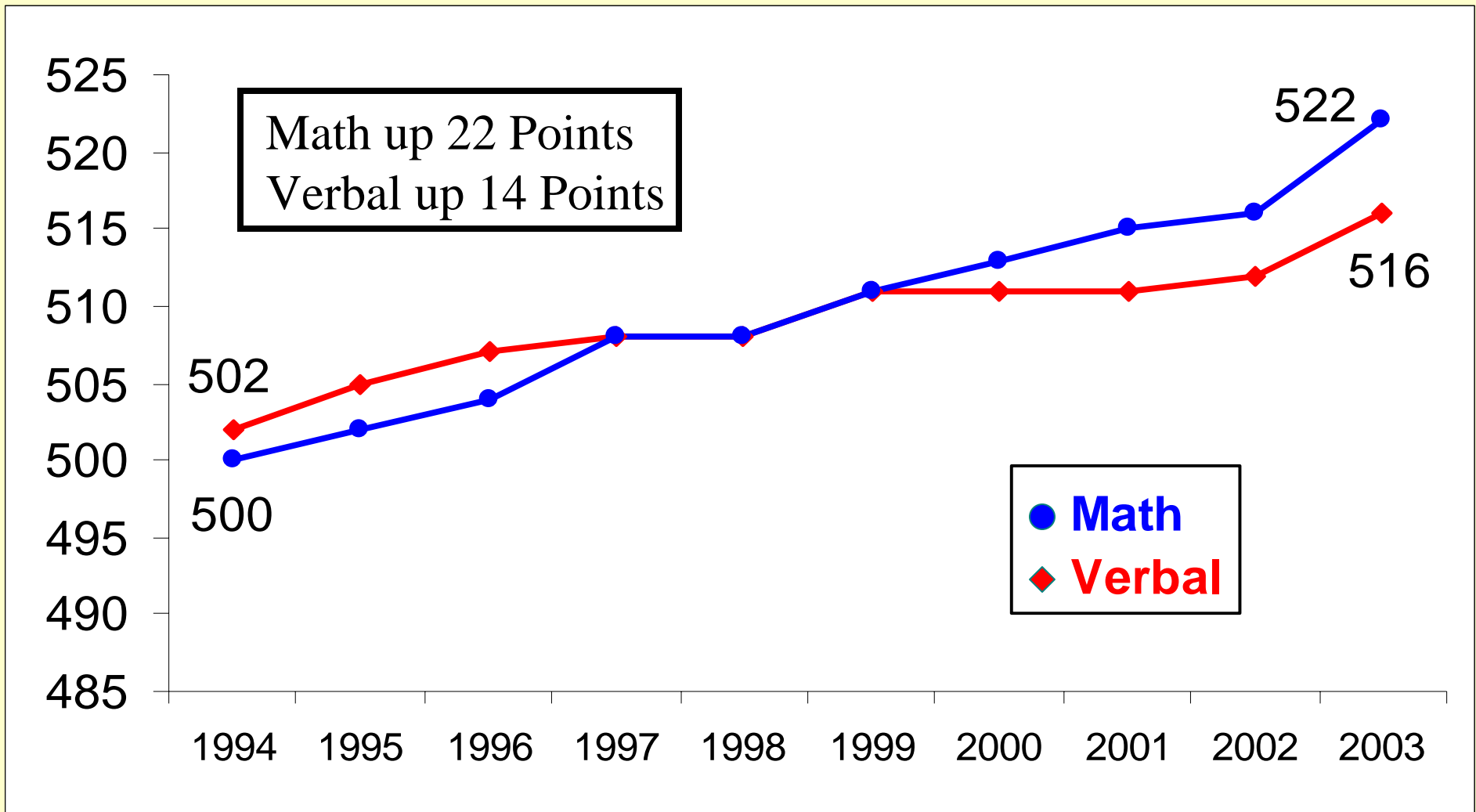
		Percent Warning/ Failing		Percent Proficient & Advanced	
Gr 4 ELA	2003	9	-2	56	+5
	2001	11		51	
Gr 4 Math	2003	16	-7	40	+6
	1998	23		34	
Gr 6 Math	2003	26	-7	42	+6
	2001	33		36	
Gr 7 ELA	2003	7	-5	66	+11
	2001	12		55	
Gr 8 Math	2003	33	-9	37	+6
	1998	42		31	
Gr 10 ELA	2003	11	-7	61	+10
	2001	18		51	
Gr 10 Math	2003	20	-5	51	+6
	2001	25		45	



Massachusetts Mean SAT Scores: Combined Verbal & Math 1994-2003

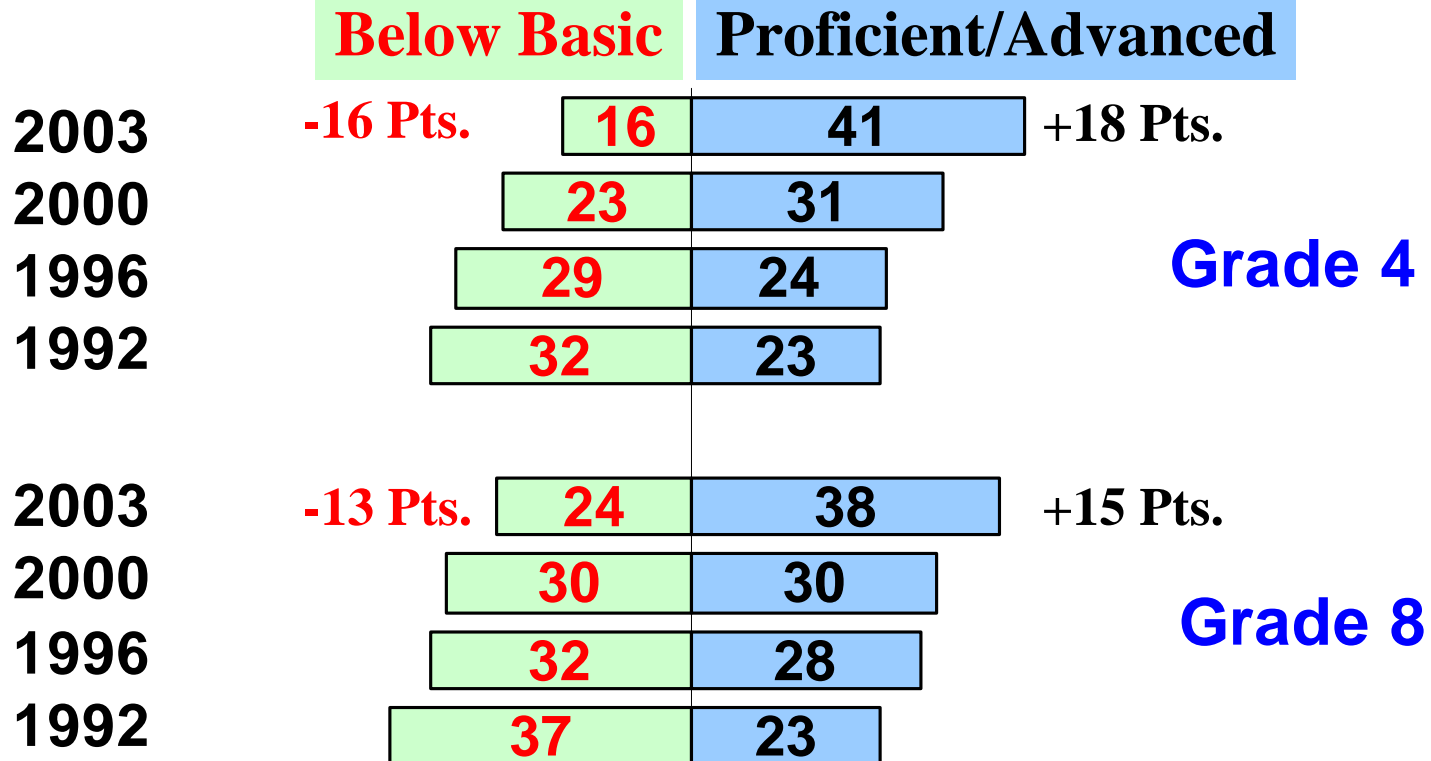


Massachusetts Mean SAT Scores 1994-2003



Massachusetts Math NAEP Results 1992 – 2003

Percentage of Students



Reasons for Success

- Setting the Right Standard for High School Graduation
- Unity among State Leaders
- Fair and Transparent Assessment System



Setting the Right Standard

MA High School Graduation Requirement

- Began by tackling ELA and Math only
- Administered the test for 3 years before it counted
- Goldilocks passing score



Unity among State Leaders

- Initial commitment from business community
- 4 Republican governors and Democratic legislature
- Stability of State Board of Education and Commissioner
- Support of key urban superintendents
- Ongoing support of business groups
 - Mass Insight
 - MassINC
 - Foundation for Partnerships



Fair and Transparent System

- **All tests**
 - Participation of teachers - all phases
 - Release of test questions, rubrics, anchor papers
 - Student reports include item by item scores
 - *TestWiz* software for analyzing results
 - MCAS Alternate Assessment Portfolio Program
- **Graduation Requirement**
 - Focused retests
 - Performance Appeals Program
 - Academic Support grants
 - Certificate of Attainment
 - Opportunities for continuing education

What's Coming Up

- Short Term
- Long Term



State Agency Reorganization

- SBA
- Early Childhood



2004 MCAS & AYP Reports

- August 16 Student level results posted
- Week August 23 Preliminary AYP determinations; list of schools and districts required to offer choice/supplemental services
- Late August Release state level MCAS results
- September 17 School, district, & parent reports delivered, including summer retest results
- September 22 Release school and district MCAS results



MEPA

Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment

- Content tested
 - Reading, Writing, Speaking & Listening
- Tests forms
 - 3-4; 5-6; 7-8; 9-12
- Proficiency Levels
 - Beginning, Low Intermediate, Intermediate, Transitioning
- 2004-2005 Schedule
 - October 18-22 Baseline Test
 - March 28-April 8 Post Test/Pre Test
- Reporting
 - Percentage of students making progress (moving from lower to higher proficiency levels)



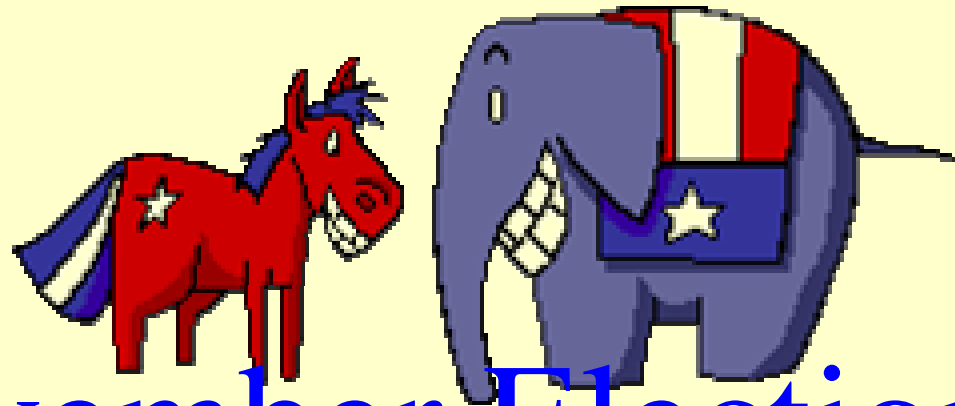
Other Important Fall Events



Red Sox Win World Series!



Other Important Fall Events



November Elections



Legal Proceedings

- Hancock
 - Case argued in October
 - Decision in winter or spring 2005
- Student 1
 - Back in state court
 - Discovery this summer and fall
 - Trial date?



Spring 2005 MCAS (What's new)

- Item tryouts for new tests required by NCLB
 - reading in grades 5, 6, & 8
 - math in grades 3, 5, & 7
- Item tryouts for History and Social science in grades 5, 7, & 10*
- Pilot tests at high school level in biology, chemistry, introductory physics, technology/engineering

*** Pending funding**



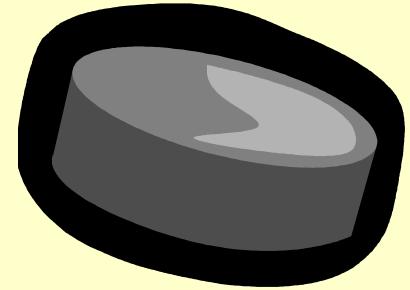
Long Term

- Student Learning
- Educator Training
- School and District Evaluation



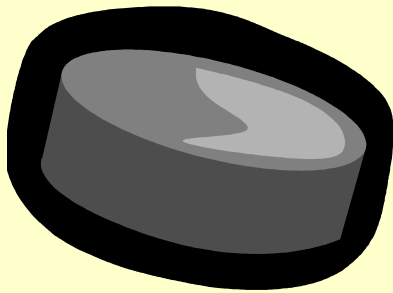
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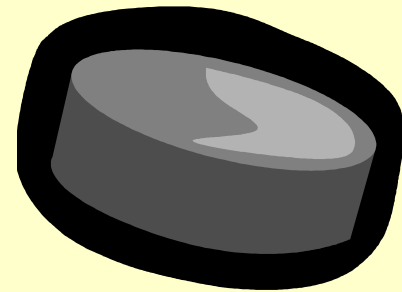
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Long Term

- Student Learning
- Educator Training
- School and District Evaluation



Student Learning

- MCAS will make increased use of technology to administer and score tests
- Superintendents and Principals will complement MCAS with district- and school-wide formative assessments to frequently monitor
 - Teacher effectiveness
 - Strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum
 - Individual student needs
- The competency determination will include science and history as well as ELA and math



Educator Development

- Beyond the classroom, teachers will have increased opportunities for leadership in curriculum and assessment development, data analysis, mentoring, coaching, and peer evaluation
- There will be a continued emphasis on developing teachers' subject area expertise
- Superintendents will expand their leadership skills through participation in regional study groups



School and District Evaluation

- There will be a continued emphasis in assisting all students to perform at the Proficient (and Advanced) levels
- The school and district evaluation system will look at the progress of *cohorts* of students over time
- Educators will have increased access to state and local data on student achievement, teacher effectiveness, and program quality





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 - Test Items
 - Scoring Guides/Student Work
 - MCAS Results
- > MCAS Alternate Assessment
- > English Proficiency
- > Assessments
- > Publications
- > Links to Related Resources
- > MCAS Performance Appeals
 - Parent Information Hotline
 - 1-866-MCAS220



Assessment/Accountability > MCAS >

Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

MCAS Participation by Students with Significant Disabilities

To: Directors of Approved Private Special Education Schools

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education


Date: July 6, 2004

I am writing to alert you to recent findings from the Department's data on MCAS participation by students attending approved private special education schools, and to remind you of the importance of including all students in MCAS.

Participation Requirements

The Education Reform Act of 1993 requires that each student from Massachusetts who receives a publicly-funded education, including students with disabilities, participate in MCAS by taking one of the following assessment options:

- the MCAS tests without accommodations; or
- the MCAS tests with accommodations that are generally consistent with those accommodations already in use for routine instruction; or
- the MCAS Alternate Assessment (MCAS-Alt) if a student with a significant disability cannot demonstrate knowledge on a standard MCAS test even with accommodations. Alternate assessments consist of a portfolio of work samples, instructional data, and other evidence of student achievement collected throughout the school year in each assessed content area.

Each student must participate using the assessment option above that allows him or her to demonstrate achievement of the skills and content contained in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. MCAS participation guidelines are explained in the Department publication titled  [Requirements for the Participation of Students with Disabilities in MCAS](#) (2004 Update).

The federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 makes it even more important to assess each student using the most appropriate MCAS format, since all MCAS scores, including the MCAS-Alt, contribute to the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) determination of the student's home/sending district. This is detailed in [Administrative Advisory SPED 2004-2: AYP and Students with Disabilities](#)

2003 MCAS Participation Rates

A recent review of the Department's 2003 MCAS participation data has raised questions regarding student participation in statewide assessments in several approved private special education schools. The review indicates that a small but significant number of students attending these schools do not appear to be participating in MCAS.

It is a requirement that all students submit a standard MCAS Answer Booklet, regardless of whether they take standard MCAS tests (with or without accommodations) or the MCAS-Alt. It appears from the data that, in some cases, either none, or only some, of the students in the assessed grades participated in MCAS, as

evidenced by the number of MCAS Answer Booklets received by the Department for these students. We understand that the discrepancy in the number of booklets returned might be due to administrative errors or to a misunderstanding of this requirement, but we are concerned that it may also indicate non-participation in the required assessments.

Participation in MCAS Alternate Assessment

In particular, the data for a majority of approved private special education schools show a lower-than-expected participation rate in the MCAS-Alt option for students in these settings. Since it is our expectation that students require more restrictive private special education school settings only if their special education needs are complex, we would expect to see greater use of the MCAS-Alt option.

This raises a question of whether or not students in these settings are receiving sufficient consideration for the MCAS-Alt assessment option as part of their IEP Team discussions. While IEP Teams determine how students participate in the required MCAS assessment, Teams do not have authority to exempt students from the state's assessment program, nor to limit consideration of the full range of options for MCAS participation that are available to students with disabilities.

Application and Monitoring Procedures

To ensure the participation of students in the MCAS assessments, I have authorized the following changes to the application procedure for approved private special education schools. This fall, private special education schools will be required to provide the following information and assurances with their applications for approval (see Criterion 7.3 of Application Procedures for the Approval of Massachusetts Public or Private Day or Residential Special Education School Programs):

- assurances that alternate assessments were discussed and considered as an assessment option at IEP Team meetings for all students who have either failed one or more MCAS tests, or who have significant disabilities. While we understand that private special education schools convene these IEP meetings with the sending public school district, we seek assurance that private special education school leaders take an active role to ensure appropriate MCAS participation for students placed in their schools;
- documentation that all students in the program participated in MCAS, including preparing separate lists of students who participated in the standard MCAS assessment options and those participating in the MCAS-Alt option;
- assurances that private special education school staff have attended MCAS and MCAS-Alt training, and that staff will continue to participate in training as necessary to ensure full and appropriate participation in the required MCAS assessment.

In addition, I have authorized the Department's statewide monitoring procedures to include a review of data related to MCAS participation by students with disabilities prior to onsite visits at public and private schools to ensure that all students are participants in our state assessment program.

Next Steps

It is important to make certain that the following steps have occurred for students in your program:

- each student must be reported to the Department's Student Information Management System (SIMS) by the student's home (sending) district;
- each student must have a ten-digit State Assigned Student Identification Number (SASID);
- each student's current educational placement and home (sending) district must be included in the SIMS data sent to the Department by the home (sending) district; and
- each student's SASID and home (sending) district code must be correctly coded on an MCAS Answer Booklet for each required MCAS assessment, regardless of which MCAS option is used by the student. (NOTE: District codes may be found on the Internet at <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/districts.asp>)

Since public school administrators are receiving copies of this memorandum, we are requesting their assistance to make additions or to correct oversights that may have been brought to their attention.

In fall 2004, we will provide each private approved special education school with current enrollment and MCAS participation data. This information will be useful in determining whether all students in your program have participated appropriately in the 2004 MCAS, and whether all students are recognized in the

SIMS database.

Future MCAS Training Opportunities

The Department provides ongoing training opportunities to Massachusetts educators, including private school educators serving publicly-funded students, who must conduct alternate assessments. If requested, trainers will also provide training directly to staff at their local school. In September, the Department will send you information and registration materials specifically for approved private special education school staff and administrators.

Further questions regarding MCAS participation should be addressed to the Office of Student Assessment at (781) 338-3625.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

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School and District Improvement Planning and Support

School Performance Improvement Mapping Guide Posted on DOE Website

To: Superintendents of Schools, Charter School Leaders and Other Interested Parties

From: David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education

Date: July 20, 2004

I am pleased to announce the release of online tools and materials for the **Performance Improvement Mapping (PIM) Process**, an intensive, inquiry- and evidence-based **School Improvement Planning** model. PIM was originally designed by the Department of Education for schools declared to be Under-performing by the state Board of Education to help them formulate improvement plans to raise the achievement of their students. However, at its core, PIM is a logical and sequential planning process that can help schools conduct a deeply reflective review of their performance and operations and make essential improvements. Because many schools could benefit from using the PIM tools and methods, we have made the PIM handbook available on the Department of Education web site as a resource at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sdi/pim/>.

Using the 10-step PIM process, school leadership teams set student performance goals aligned with state and federal performance targets, investigate the causes of low achievement in student groups, and develop strategies and action plans that map how schools will provide students with the learning experiences that address their specific gaps in skills and knowledge. The PIM process is distinguished by a systematic approach that:

- Uses student performance and other data analysis as the foundation for all decision-making and planning at the school,
- Specifically targets key teaching and learning issues that are within the schools' control,
- Draws clear connections between identified problems in student performance and planned improvement strategies, using solid evidence and justification, and
- Tracks and updates implementation and outcomes for continuous improvement.

PIM is most effective when it is guided by a trained facilitator who has learned to help school leadership teams reach the desired outcomes of each PIM step. We have already offered facilitator training to districts with Under-performing schools and schools currently identified for improvement under NCLB. While we do not have the resources at the present time to provide trained facilitators for every district, we are considering ways to train more facilitators to ensure that the planning processes undertaken by schools in other districts yield the best possible results.

For more information, visit the web site of the School and District Improvement Planning and Support (SDI) unit at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sdi/>.